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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[30 August 2015]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Situation in the Syrian Arab Republic

As the government in Damascus proceeds with undiminished brutality (barrel bombs, rocket launchers, tanks, artillery) against the Sunni opposition and the Sunni civil population, radical armed groups like the "Islamic State" or the "al-Nusra Front" continue their merciless prosecution of minorities.

According to UNHCR around 4.013.000 people fled into Syria´s neighboring countries by now. In Syria itself 7,6 million people are on the run (updated: July 9th 2015). Since the war broke out four years ago around 250.000 People have been killed.

Many refugees found shelter in northern Syria. Hence, we are witnessing with great concern the approach of the Turkish armed forces which seems to proceed first against Kurdish positions and villages in northern Syria rather against positions of the "Islamic State" – according to our information.

Correspondingly, the journal "Radikal" reported that during assaults on the PKK in Iraq on July 24th 2015, 75 Turkish fighter Jets have been used – whereas during bombardments on IS-positions in Syria only three. Eyewitnesses which we estimated as being reliable reported that in the early hours of morning on July 25th 2015 positions of Kurdish People´s Protection Units (YPG) in the village of Zormaghr west of Kobani were attacked by Turkish tanks and artillery and that Turkish fighting jets charged the village of Hillel south of Kobani which had been freed by Kurdish militiamen on July 31th 2015 between 9.00 and 11.00 o´clock.

This approach, especially in northern Syria, has the potential to result in catastrophic consequences for the humanitarian situation in Europe as a whole. Despite the fact that the attacks of the Turkish government are conducive to the weakening of one of the most important Allies against the "Islamic State", it destabilizes furthermore one of the last Syrian Territories in which it was possible until now to establish some kind of security for the local people and spare them the asylum homes in Europe, America and Australia.

Especially religious and ethnic minorities – like Christian Aramean-Assyrians, Arameans or Yezidis which have to suffer to a great extent in the residual Syria – found shelter in territories controlled by the Kurds in northern Syria. Our human rights organization is in the process to start a dialogue with the local responsible authorities concerning the watchful observation on human rights. Certainly there are deficits in this subject; but we can prove due to eyewitnesses that minorities are protected there. Therefore, the Turkish assaults on this area should be prevented in any case.

Against this background it is urgently necessary to put this topic on the international political agenda. The Turkish government has to be unmistakably requested not to endanger the relative stability in northern Syria.
Demands:

All fighting parties have to respect the law of nations. All parties have to concentrate on the fight against the "Islamic State". One has to consider the local religious and ethnic circumstances when intending to establish a "security zone" in northern Syria as well as providing new causes of conflict through selective settling of Sunni-Arab refugees there.

One has to allow independent observers in the official investigation by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the deadly outcome of Turkish airstrikes in Syria to achieve incontrovertible results according to international law in a transparent proceeding.